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# FREEDOM'S CALL AND DUTY

BY

C. A. McCURDY, M.P.



Addresses given at Central Hall,  
Westminster, May and June, 1918



# TWO ADDRESSES

Delivered in the

CENTRAL HALL, WESTMINSTER

May and June, 1918

BY

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With an Introduction by

The Rt. Hon. SIR FREDERICK E. POLLOCK, Bart.

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## INTRODUCTION

BY SIR FREDERICK POLLOCK.

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**E**VEN since these addresses were delivered notable progress has been made towards accomplishing their object. The essential points of a League to enforce peace have been accepted on behalf of His Majesty's Government in the pronouncement made by Lord Curzon in the House of Lords, and the need of arming it with the means of prompt and powerful action is fully recognised. A few students of public affairs whose competence it would be absurd to depreciate are still opposed to the proposal as a whole, regarding it as impracticable or dangerous. But I cannot see that either Lord Sydenham or Professor Firth (to name the strongest of



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our adversaries) has paid serious attention to recent expositions either here or in America. The leading supporters are no visionaries; they are quite aware of the difficulties; they differ more or less, as men must in the early stages of any new scheme, as to the best means of overcoming them, but are also prepared to agree on whatever means appear after full discussion to be the most promising. Certainly all their desires will not be fulfilled all at once: that is inevitable in every such case. But the main purpose can and will be attained if there is a general will to attain it. For the production and strengthening of that will such addresses as these of Mr. McCurdy's are of great value, and the more of them we have the better.

FREDERICK POLLOCK.

# THE WAR AIMS OF THE ALLIES

**Y**ESTERDAY I stood by the steps of St. George's Hospital and watched the American troops marching in their thousands through London. The London crowds were anxious from their hearts to welcome them, but the cheers were quiet and subdued.

For there was something in these young soldiers that stirred deeper emotions than any cheers could express. It was not a pageant, but a pilgrimage, that we saw passing by. On their sober grey uniforms was no relieving touch of colour, no glint of

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metal, and their faces were the faces of men conscious of a high mission, marching in sober earnest for the accomplishment of a great purpose. They were marching to a music of their own, to the music of the battle hymn of the Republic.

“ In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born  
    across the sea,  
And a glory in His bosom that transfigures  
    you and me ;  
As He died to make men holy, let us die to  
    make men free !

While God is marching on.”

Straight of limb, with clear eyes and clean hearts, they had come thousands of miles upon a journey that for many of them must end in death. In a few weeks they would pass into the valley of the shadow which lies across the desolated plains of France, and they would pass “ not afraid of



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them which are able to kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul.”

I thought of that band of pilgrims that sailed from these shores three hundred years ago to find freedom in a new world, and then again of these men as pilgrims returning to that England which their fathers had left.

And I realised how much we owe to the American people and to their President in this war. They are giving us their treasure, their great ships, and their splendid men, but, above all material assistance, they are giving us the spiritual consolation of which we stood most in need—the comforting assurance that we did right when we entered upon the rugged path of war.

FAR away from the noise and dust of the battle, without haste or passion, the great Republic has given her verdict and

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proclaimed judgment on the great issues of right and wrong.

She stands with us to-day—stands with us to the end—because she finds our cause is a just and righteous cause, and the message she sends us is the message to which the feet of her soldiers were beating time in solemn cadence as I watched them pass by.

“As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free!

While God is marching on.”

**W**HEN the storm of war broke with desolating fury over Europe four years ago we were stunned with the violence and horror of undreamed of happenings.

Some people have remained stunned ever since, are still babbling of our former friendship with Germany, still unable to

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realise that the old Europe lies broken in blood and ashes about us—that there can never more be any peaceful life for us or for our children until by toil and anguish we shall have overcome the forces of evil.

Some of the murdered Belgians first saw what German friendship meant through eyes that were already glazed in death.

I suppose there are still some people so crazed by calamity as to doubt whether thousands of Belgians were in fact massacred by a Christian people in the first weeks of this war.

How was it possible for the German rulers and the German people to do this thing? The answer is simple but sadly true. The German civilisation, the German Kultur, made it a natural thing for them to do. Let us get a clear view of what German civilisation means. It is admirable in its efficiency, but different from the

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civilisation of Western Europe and the New World.

English, French, Americans, Italians, Portuguese, Spaniards all have this in common : They are the inheritors of Roman Law and culture. They are the descendants of peoples whose civilisation was commenced by the great Roman Empire 2000 years ago—who were first conquered by Rome and then taught to clothe themselves, to make roads, to build bridges, to construct houses of brick and stone, and to respect the Reign of Law.

The savage tribes of Germany missed their schooling. They were never Romanised. They resisted Roman civilisation at its zenith ; they ruthlessly destroyed Roman civilisation in the days of its decline.

And as they were never Romanised, so for nearly 500 years they remained un-Christianised, while that new and powerful

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instrument of civilisation was moulding the lives and characters of their neighbours. As the great German Goethe wrote: "The Germans are of yesterday. A few centuries must still elapse before it can be said of them 'It is long since they were barbarians.'"

German civilisation is different from ours in its origins. It is, as we have discovered, different in its results.

**E**VEN to-day German Christianity is a different religion from the Christianity of the rest of Europe. If you turn to the pages of the *Encyclopædia Biblica* you will find that great German theologians, invited to contribute to a standard work on the Christian religion, tell us in many pages and with much learning that the Bible story of Christ's birth is a fable invented in the reign of the Emperor



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Nero, that the accounts of the Resurrection are to be explained as a case of subjective hallucination on the part of the witnesses

The god of battles to whom the Kaiser appeals is not the Christians' God.

**I**N *The Pentecost of Calamity*, Mr. Owen Wister has grouped together from the utterances of Prussian historians, philosophers, and generals, and from the speeches of the Kaiser, a statement of the creed of Germany, part of it enunciated in cold deliberation before the war, and all of it a declaration of German faith since illustrated and ratified by German deeds. Let us first listen to the Kaiser.

## THE GERMAN CREED.

### THE KAISER.

“**WE** Hohenzollerns take our crown from God alone.

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“**N**OTHING must be settled  
in this world without the  
intervention of the German  
Emperor.

“**O**N me the spirit of God has  
descended.

“**W**HO opposes me I shall crush  
to pieces.”

## THE GOSPEL OF MILITARISM.

“**M**IGHT is right, and what is  
right is decided by war.  
War gives a biologically just  
decision.

“**E**VERY youth who enters a  
beer-drinking and duelling  
club will receive the true direction  
of his life.

“**W**AR in itself is a good thing.  
God will see to it that war  
always recurs.

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“**T**HE efforts directed toward the abolition of war must not only be termed foolish, but absolutely immoral.

“**T**HE sight of suffering does one good; the infliction of suffering does one more good.”

As Bismarck said in 1870, “We must leave the French, in the provinces we invade, only their eyes to weep with.”

## RULES FOR THE CONDUCT OF THIS WAR.

“**T**HIS war must be conducted as ruthlessly as possible.

“**T**HE Belgians should not be shot dead. They should be so left as to make impossible all hope of recovery.

“**T**HE troops are to treat the Belgian civil population with unrelenting severity and frightfulness.

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“**F**RANCE must be so completely crushed that she will never again cross our path. The French have shown themselves decadent and without respect for the Divine law.

“**A** GAINST England we fight for booty. We have to crush absolutely perfidious Albion—subdue her to such an extent that her influence all over the world is broken for ever.

“**L**ET us drop our miserable attempts to excuse Germany’s action. We willed it. Our might shall create a new law in Europe.

“**T**HEY call us barbarians. What of it? To us is given Faith, Hope, and Hatred ; but Hatred is the greatest of these three.”

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THE apostasy of the English-speaking peoples has not been that they have ceased to believe in God, but that they have pretended not to believe in the Devil.

Since the first days of the war there have been people to apologise and make excuse for every wickedness that has been perpetrated. They tell us that the atrocities are exaggerated, that all the nations are alike to blame, or that no one is to blame at all—that it is all the fault of a “secret diplomacy,” for which Germany is no more responsible than ourselves. But the truth remains, that this war was prepared and carried out by men—men whose names we know.

They were wicked men, and they have not in the least repented of their wickedness to this day. They love war and bloodshed as good men love peace. Even their tender



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mercies are full of cruelty, as Russia and Rumania have found to their cost. We cannot find salvation from war by pretending that there is no difference between right and wrong, by saying that murderers and murdered are all brothers, that there is no great difference between one man and another.

We must look at facts as they are.

THE early Christians loved peace, but they loved righteousness more. When they suffered persecution, were thrown to wild beasts, tortured, and crucified, they could have chosen peace. They preferred death. And let us not forget those tens of thousands of Armenian Christians who have suffered martyrdom during this war rather than renounce their religion—those hundreds of thousands who have been slain because they were Christians.

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There are people in this country who have already forgotten these things, who loudly reproach the Allies for entertaining "shameful designs" of breaking up the Turkish Empire, for making "secret treaties" to rescue Armenians, Syrians, and Arabs from Turkish rule.

Such people have lost all sense of right and wrong. They are suffering from shock. If they had lived in Galilee they would have found excuses for Herod.

IF a love of peace can lead British Christians to such strange views about that vice-regency of Hell which is known as the Turkish Empire, it is not surprising that to some people it seems a right thing to urge us to lay down our arms and make a "peace by negotiation" with the Central Powers.

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Russia has tried it, and Rumania has tried it, and we are asked to follow their unhappy example.

These are counsels of despair. We might divide the kingdoms of the world with Germany, but we could not lay down our arms so long as the rulers of Germany worship a God of battles, preach war as their religion, practise war as their trade. We might make peace by agreement with men who proclaim the wholesale murder and robbery of war to be a divinely appointed method for the aggrandizement of emperors and states, but if we did we could not decently afterwards punish common men for murder and larceny in our criminal courts or leave the Ten Commandments on our church walls. “*Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers, for what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? And what concord hath Christ with Belial?*”

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## A LEAGUE TO ABOLISH WAR

THIS war is not merely a war of material forces, of armies and navies, of railways and factories and munitions of war. It is also a war of ideas. However the battles may end, the world can never be safe for democracy or for Christianity, or for peaceful decent people, until the German people have cast out the devil that has entered into them and renounced militarism and all its works. No one expects or for one moment desires to destroy the German people, as the Armenians and the Serbians have been destroyed, and so long as the great and powerful German people are prepared

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to sacrifice their own youth and their own treasure to the Moloch of war there can be no real peace for the rest of the world.

The only short way to peace would be the sudden conversion of Germany to a Christian view of war, a sincere and unfeigned desire on the part of the German people to renounce the whole gospel of militarism, to recognise and respect the rights of others, a determination to rid themselves of the Hohenzollerns and all their dreams of world conquest and dominion.

**I**S the conversion of the German people possible? No one can say. The alternative, and the only alternative, is their complete military defeat.

The survival of a militarist and undefeated Germany preparing for another war is not a tolerable hypothesis. We cannot leave to another generation a task



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more terrible than that we now find difficult enough to perform. The militarism of Prussia must be either broken by the sword or honestly and definitely renounced by the German people before we can get the security for permanent peace which alone could compensate us for even a tenth of our sacrifices.

I believe that among the German people there are many men and women, of whose opinions we now hear little, who honestly detest militarism as much as we do.

I believe there are millions of Germans and Austrians so disillusioned of war that they would eagerly take any honourable opportunity to bring this war to an end.

**I**F we could show the peoples of Germany and Austria a way to end not this war only, but the whole iniquity of war for all time—to secure peace for their children as

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well as themselves—and if we convinced them that the way was open so far as we were concerned, I believe the days of the militarist autocracies would be numbered and the end of this war would not be far off.

At present the idea that war as an institution might be disestablished, that the burden of armaments and conscription might be got rid of altogether, has hardly entered the German mind. It has not yet sunk very deeply into our own.

And yet that very purpose—the disestablishment of war—is the essential purpose for which the Allies now realise that they are all fighting. Territorial aims we have none, except so far as the redemption of subject peoples or the restoration of lands wrongfully held is necessary to give security and tranquillity to the future life of Europe.

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The means of realising that aim by creating some new relationship between the different people of the world is still hardly defined. It is the policy of A LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

PRESIDENT WILSON and others have proposed that the nations should join in mutual covenants to submit their disputes to arbitration, to enforce the decisions which the Court of Arbitration shall pronounce, and to defend one another against any nation which makes war instead of submitting its dispute to peaceful settlement.

I will not go into all the details of the probable constitution of such a League. To be effective it would have to include a majority at least of the great states. If the Central Powers were not included it would be a League of Defence against

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German and Austrian militarism rather than a true League of Nations.

But I want to point out the fundamental principles of such a League.

**I**N the first place it must be a League of Nations, not of dynasties—a League of Peoples, not of emperors or kings. In the second place it must be, as President Wilson has said, a League of Honour—not a mere lawyer-made contract, but a pact of peoples expressing simply and sincerely promises honestly intended to be performed. And lastly it must rest on a basis of moral law ; it must be more than an agreement, it must be a creed—the articles of faith of a new brotherhood of peoples, pledged to observe peace and renounce war, not because peace is convenient and war costly, but because peace is right and war is wrong.

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THE first covenant of the League must be a recognition and confession that in the past we have all sinned and sincerely repent, and a promise that in future we will renounce war as a crime not to be tolerated among civilised peoples, whether as a means of settling disputes or for enforcing claims however just.

I am not allowed to grow rich by murdering and robbing my neighbours. What is law for me must be law also for emperors and kings.

If I have a just claim to enforce, grievous wrongs to be redressed, I must go to the courts—I may not vindicate my rights by force of arms.

The same rule must apply to that community of individuals which we call a state.

We cannot abolish the possibility of war any more than we can abolish murder or



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any other crime. But we can treat war as we have treated slavery and the duel—make it discreditable, disreputable, criminal, strip it of its glittering uniform, and recognise naked murder for what it is.

AND the second covenant of the League must be the golden rule of brotherhood—a crime committed against one people is a crime committed against all. There can be no neutrality in the presence of crime. So long as any militarist state remains in the world every member of the League must be prepared to repel aggression against whomsoever directed, as we should rush to prevent a murder being committed under our eyes.

It will not be a League of pacifism or of non-resistance. Killing is not murder if done without malice in self-defence. We propose to treat the wholesale killing, we

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call war, just on the same principles as we treat killing by an individual.

Aggressive war, no matter what its motive or how noble its purpose, is murder, and must be treated as such by all honest folk. Professional war-makers, militarist imperialist states must be outlawed politically and economically from the comity of nations. Aggression must be resisted by every weapon which science can lend to the guardians of the peace. "*Let him that hath no sword sell his cloke and buy one.*"

**I**T will be a League of Peace to men of goodwill, a League of War against all who commit or prepare to commit the crime of war.

The test of membership is therefore twofold—only nations possessing some measure of self-government can have the power to enter into the covenants of the

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League, only nations willing to give proofs of an honest renunciation of imperialist and annexationist aims will be welcomed as members.

In return they obtain a guarantee of defence against aggression given by all the members of the League.

Courts of arbitration for the peaceful settlement of disputes, the limitation of armaments, as soon as the adhesion of other Powers renders it unnecessary to maintain large defensive forces, follow as a matter of course—they are the machinery by which the objects of the League would ultimately be carried into effect.

LET us consider the formation of the League in another way, as the starting-point of a new international relationship in which the rule of law is to supersede the rule of force. Many writers have suggested

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a world court of arbitration, and discussed the possible means of enforcing its decisions.

They overlook the underlying sanction on which the observance of all laws ultimately depends—not force, but the sanction of public opinion, the common agreement of men.

It is not the policeman or the hangman that prevents us all breaking the law against murder. It is the common conscience, that regards murder as a crime. The policeman is there only to deal with that small minority that has no conscience in the matter.

International law, if it is successfully to banish war, must be built on the same sure foundation.

We must first quicken the consciences of men in all countries, obtain a common agreement of heart and mind, and then we shall find the task of providing sanctions for dealing with the crime of war not beyond our powers.

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**B**UT the conscience of humanity must first be roused, not to desist from strife leaving the forces of evil triumphant and strengthened, but to insist that militarism shall be completely and finally overthrown.

We can only hope to quicken that conscience in Germany by making plain beyond all possibility of doubt our own sincerity, our own determination to establish the kingdom of righteousness on earth. How can we better demonstrate our sincerity, how can we more clearly explain our purpose, than by doing ourselves what we desire other peoples to do, pledging ourselves in mutual covenants of peace that will ensure that so far as we are concerned, come what may, when this war is ended, America, Great Britain, and all our present Allies will have banished for ever the possibility of war between themselves, and will be willing to

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admit to the new brotherhood of nations all other peoples of like mind ?

A GERMAN professor said the other day that the English fight best when they are fighting for some simple ideal such as freedom or democracy.

The constitution by the Allies of a League of Nations pledged here and now to make an end of wars for ever so far as lies within their power, will give the moral and spiritual forces which are on our side a rallying-point and a direction—will cause heart-searchings in Germany—will make our own people more resolute than ever to secure the victory that we seek.

“ Not for a flag or king or emperor,  
But for a dream born in a herdsman's shed,  
And for the secret scripture of the poor.”







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